Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District
Board of Directors Meeting
M I N U T E S

Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 6:30pm

Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District • Activity Room 3
4201 Guardian Street, Simi Valley, CA 93063 • (805) 584-4400

A video recording of tonight's meeting is available on the District Website at www.RSRPD.org.

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Chair Abele called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Air Force Veteran Douglas Bamforth.

2. ROLL CALL – Directors Cofield, Gray, Lundstrom, Vice Chair Dennert, and Chair Abele were present. Staff in attendance included: Laura Ballantoni, Paul Friedeborn, Greg Laranjo, Richard Lemmo, Matt Mason, Zach Miller, Wayne Nakaoka, Dan Paranick, Theresa Pennington, Jennifer Santos, Alex Stumfall, Gina Viecco, District Counsel Ryan Guiboa, and Rangers Deirmendjian, Muradyan, and Rosales.

   Guests attended tonight's meeting in-person and via Zoom. Those who made public comments are listed under the appropriate Item below.

3. AGENDA REVIEW – There were no changes to tonight's agenda.

4. PUBLIC STATEMENTS (ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)

   Keith Miler is the President of the Simi Hills Men's Golf Club; they are concerned about recent changes at Simi Hills Golf Course (SHGC.) They have been active since 1981, and their group plays 1000+ rounds of golf per month. They also support the Pro Shop and restaurant, on tournament days, the restaurant at SHGC is packed with their members. They understand recent changes have been suggested by a golf consulting group. Their Executive Board of the Club would like to discuss the consultant's findings. Paranick replied, the tentative date for the golf findings is April 16th during the regular Board Meeting.

   Glen Lipman, representing Longball Academy, is again asking new Board Members if they would place an agenda Item to discuss baseball practices on softball fields. They continue to have difficulty finding practice fields. He has visited other areas that are softball fields but allow baseball practice.

5. CONSENT AGENDA (Matters under the Consent Agenda are considered routine and shall be acted upon without discussion by one motion approving the Consent Agenda. If discussion is desired, the item may be removed from the Consent Agenda upon a Director's request.)

   a. Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors on February 26, 2025.

   b. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors on March 5, 2025.

c. Approval of 2/28/25 Accounts Payable Check Register and 2/21/25 Payroll Check Register.

d. Authorization to Solicit Bids for the Medea Creek Hazardous Vegetation Removal Grant Project In Oak Park – The written report was provided by Jennifer Santos, Senior Management Analyst.

Motion: Director Gray moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Director Cofield seconded. The motion carried with the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Cofield, Dennert, Gray, Lundstrom
Noes:
Absent:
Abstain:

6. PRESENTATIONS

a. Presentation of the Full-Time Employee of the Month for February 2025 to Greg Laranjo, Recreation Coordinator – Staff report was provided by Theresa Pennington, Director of Administration. Greg has been with the District for 35 years; this is his 4th award. His supervisor Laura Ballantoni read a poem in his honor and co-worker Matt Mason commended Greg for being dedicated to the District and a great person. The Board thanked Greg for his dedicated work, especially with the sport leagues, adding he is awesome, a wealth of knowledge, and a great guy.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. CONTINUED BUSINESS – NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review and Discussion Regarding the Park Ranger Program Annual Update – Staff report was provided by Dan Paranick, District Manager. The Ranger program was established in 1986, and the Rangers have been patrolling parks, trails, and open space in Simi Valley and Oak Park for the last 38 years. Paranick provided an overview of the 2024 accomplishments and activity statistics. Future initiatives included security cameras, proactive open space management, and addressing e-motorcycle issues.

Dennert appreciates the distinction between peddle assist bikes (e-bikes) and e-motorcycles (e-motos). He has seen the issues within the community caused by young e-Moto riders. He asked if staff have met with the City and what their thoughts are on this issue. Ranger Rosales replied, he suggests District staff speak at the local middle and high schools to provide education on the differences between e-bikes and e-motos and the different rules. Currently, juveniles who are unlicensed do not understand the rules of the road and will actually flee making the situation more dangerous. Staff will be working with the Police Department to diffuse the issues. Gray suggested reaching out to the public relations department for the schools to help spread the information regarding e-motos. He asked if the situation at the parks that already have security cameras has improved. Rosales replied, it does go in phases especially for Rancho Simi Community Park that corresponds with the school year. Things are quieter now and have improved with additional monitoring. However, they do expect a rise during the summer months when schools are not in session.

Cofield questioned the decrease in homeless contacts from 2022 to 2024. Rosales replied homeless outreach is still strong and the Rangers provide caring contact within the community. The homeless do move between areas.

Abele suggested the new Board members go on a ride along with the Rangers to have a better idea of their duties. Also, Ranger Roberta Abner will be honored this Friday at the Elks Lodge as a 1st Responder of the year.

Dennert thanked the Rangers for their work within the community and district. He appreciates the later hours, he recently had to contact the Rangers during off hours, and they are always responsive. He suggested adding bike patrols along the Arroyo to more effectively access the areas. He supports the Ranger program and appreciates their work keeping the parks and trails safe.

Cofield would like to schedule a ride along with the Rangers, she is interested in checking out the parks and seeing how the Rangers operate out in the field.

This was an informational item only; no action was taken by the Board.

b. Review and Direction Regarding Water Rate Increases, Water Conservation, and Possible Turf Removal within District Parks – Staff report was provided by Wayne Nakaoka, Director of Planning and Maintenance. Due to California residents adhering to conservation efforts implemented during the recent drought, water providers are no longer able to produce enough income to cover their operating costs. This prompted various agencies to increase water rates. Paranick added that the District previously reduced non-functional turf areas at the Golf Course.

Gray asked if the plan would be to do all the work at once or over a period of time. Nakaoka replied, the project would be done in-house over an extended period of time.

Cofield asked about Oak Park (OP) having reclaimed water. Nakaoka replied, when OP was developed the water lines were installed at that time. Currently there are no lines in Simi Valley for water reclamation.

Abele asked if any type of community survey has been conducted regarding the turf reduction. Paranick stated that staff have not conducted any surveys.

Chair Abele opened public comments at 7:45pm, hearing none, Abele closed public comments.

Gray thanked staff for bringing this item to discuss, he feels it would be wise to take action in areas that could easily be converted. He appreciates the inclusion of planting additional trees to help reduce heat.

Abele stated it is puzzling when the public does the right thing in reducing usage only to have the rates raised. He would like a public survey to gauge if and how much change they would want within the parks. Abele feels it would be a mistake to move forward without input.

Dennert added, two items that are scarce are water and money. While green parks have a certain appeal, having non-functional grass just for the look doesn't make sense fiscally. Natural park landscaping is still beautiful, Runkle Canyon is a great example of this design. He is ready to start slowly converting the non-functional areas.

Cofield added there will most likely be another drought in the future. She suggests converting what can be done now and getting input from the public in the future.

Lundstrom would like to start a conversation about reclaimed water with the City. He feels that native plants look great and are important pollinators. Staff could search for grants for conservation efforts.

Abele is not opposed to removing turf but would like feedback from the community first. He is not comfortable going forward with any action without a survey. Paranick suggested a professional survey as opposed to being done in-house. Hiring a professional company would facilitate the survey being done correctly. Abele requested this be presented during the upcoming Project Priority meeting.

Motion: Chair Abele moved to approve Alternate 1 as presented in staff's report amended to include a survey of local resident's opinions. Director Lundstrom seconded. The motion did not carry by the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Abele, Lundstrom
Noes: Cofield, Dennert, Gray
Absent:
Abstain:

Motion: Chair Abele moved to approve Alternate 2 as presented in staff's report amended to include a survey of local resident's opinions. There was no second for this motion.

Motion: Vice Chair Dennert moved to approve Alternate 2 as presented in staff's report. Director Gray seconded. The motion carried by the following Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Cofield, Dennert, Gray, Lundstrom
Noes: Abele
Absent:
Abstain:

10. REPORTS BY BOARD MEMBERS AND DISTRICT MANAGER

District Manager Paranick reported staff will be hosting a community meeting at Sinaloa Golf Course to review the potential site for the BMX Track. Follow up information from the community meeting will be provided to the Board. Staff will be coordinating with Board members to schedule a special meeting in May/June to discuss Mental Health/Wellness. Staff met with the representative from the RC Car group and the issue is resolved. The Golf Consultant presentation is scheduled for April 16, he will provide the new Board members with a briefing before the meeting. The results of the recent Financial Audit look really good. Design drawings for the full-size disc golf course in Simi Valley will begin in the next few weeks. On Monday he and Miller will be meeting with the Oak Park School District to discuss a possible Joint Use Agreement.

Upcoming events: First Responders Recognition event will be held at the Elks Club on March 21st, District Ranger Abner will be recognized.

Future Agenda Items: Review of park dedication fees, golf equipment purchase, golf consultant report, BMX, project priorities meeting and wellness meeting.

Committee Activity: The Historical Society meets on the 1st Monday of the month.

Director Lundstrom attended a school dance at Katherine Elementary, it was a formal and he was very impressed with their suits and dresses. On Saturday, he attended the Special Olympics at Royal High School. He represented the District at the Youth Employment Services Counsel meeting, many other local groups are participating. On April 26th from 10-1:00 they will be holding a job fair at the public library. Welcome home to the two astronauts who were stuck in space for 9 months. He was approached by the SV Archers group, they have about 100 members and are looking for an indoor target location, they need 25 yards by 15ft wide.

Director Gray received an email from a community member regarding Santa Susana Park, Paranick received the email and will follow up. Gray attended opening day for the new VC Football (Soccer) Club, the county's 1st professional league. It was sold out and a lot of fun. He will be traveling out of the Country and will have to miss the July 16th Board meeting. Happy opening day for all the MLB fans, go Dodgers, it's going to be a great season.

Vice Chair Dennert reported that Moorpark CKI, Eco's Chicos, and Hillside Hawks helped to clean up the Arroyo this past weekend. He attended a volleyball game at Borchard Park and ran into Kirk Gunning, they discussed the e-motorcycle issues. Dennert suggested the possibility of a skateboarding tournament. The City will be creating a Bicycle Master Plan, and he feels the District should participate. He is really excited to see the District's April Fools social media post this year. Happy Birthday to Abele who was born the same year that Kennedy was President, and the Park District was created.

Director Cofield was able to do some hiking and encountered some e-motorcycle riders. She appreciates the Rangers working to curb the issues. She viewed the kiosks at different park locations before the refurbishment project begins. She has received some positive feedback from the community, they are excited about BMX and pickleball courts.

Chair Abele will be attending the First Responders Award Ceremony this Friday. Thanks to his wife Jill for surprising him on his birthday, he has a great wife and great life.

11. CLOSED SESSION – NONE

12. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Abele adjourned the meeting at 8:50pm.

Dan Paranick, District Manager/Clerk